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8 March 2016

Mrs Julie Peach  
Headteacher  
Malvern Primary School  
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Dear Mrs Peach

### **Short inspection of Malvern Primary School**

Following my visit to the school on 10 February 2016, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since your school was judged to be good in May 2011.

### **This school continues to be good.**

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection. You and your leadership team have a very clear and accurate understanding of the strengths of the school and of the specific areas that need to be improved. Data are analysed effectively to pinpoint those classes and groups of pupils who are underachieving or who are in danger of underachieving. This enables very specific support to be directed at those pupils who have most need. There is a strong sense of teamwork and phase leaders manage their areas of responsibility effectively. The atmosphere around the school and in classrooms is quietly purposeful and pupils are responsive to questions and actively involved in their learning. Parents are generally positive about the school and the care and attention their children receive. As one parent confirmed, 'The school has a welcoming, caring environment from the second you walk in and this sets it apart from other schools in the area.'

Governors and school leaders share a clear commitment and common ambition for the school; they are enthusiastic in their approach and clearly involved in its day-to-day life. They are kept well informed through visits to the school and regular reports provided by yourself and other leaders. They are very clear about their responsibilities. They know the school well and they provide support and also challenge to you and your leadership team.

Since the last inspection you have taken effective action to tackle the areas identified as needing improvement. Raising attainment in writing, especially for boys, has been, and continues to be, a focus for improvement. In the last two years, pupils attending the school have attained standards significantly above the national average. This includes the boys, who benefit from many writing activities which cater for their specific interests. The basic skills of spelling and punctuation, although improving, continue to be an area where intensive support is required. Improvements in outcomes for pupils are also evident in Key Stage 1 where overall attainment is above the average. The school is aware that girls do better than boys in the lower school and strategies that are in place to address this are beginning to show impact.

### **Safeguarding is effective.**

Arrangements are robust, and leaders and governors keep these regularly under review. The school business manager ensures that checks on staff suitability with children are rigorously managed. Checks extend not only to volunteers, but also to staff at the Knowsley City Learning Centre which is situated within the school and the independent 'Kids in Bloom' nursery which is on the school site. Volunteers are interviewed to ensure they understand how to keep children safe. Vulnerable pupils and their families are well supported. Good links are in place with outside agencies, including those provided by the local authority, which provide additional specialist support and help for these pupils.

Pupils said that they felt the school was a safe environment. They have a good understanding of how to stay safe and avoid risk, including online. This is because they have good guidance from assemblies, outside speakers and a comprehensive programme of personal and social development.

### **Inspection findings**

- Through your detailed knowledge and understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school you have a clear vision of what needs to be achieved and are able to direct resources appropriately. As a result, the school is continuing to improve in many ways.
- There is a strong leadership team in place, including several new appointments. You also have a shared vision and a team commitment to making a difference to the quality of teaching and learning. Therefore, there is good capacity for improvement.
- Current pupils are making strong progress across almost all year groups, especially in reading and writing. This includes those pupils who enter Nursery or Reception class with skills below those typically expected in communication and language or personal and social development. Much of your work is focused on ensuring these pupils develop the basic skills necessary to enable

them to access their learning successfully. The school acknowledges that there needs to be greater challenge for the more-able pupils and plans are in place to make this happen.

- You correctly identified that the progress pupils are making in mathematics has not been as good as in reading and writing. You are also aware of those classes where progress has been weakest. The new subject leader is having an immediate impact in supporting and developing the subject across the school. Our scrutiny of work in books showed increased challenge and an improvement in the quality of mathematical work, especially since December. Pupils are developing some good problem-solving skills.
- Pupil premium funding is very effectively targeted to meet the needs of specific groups of disadvantaged pupils. The impact is thoroughly documented and very well analysed. As a result, by the time they leave school, most of these pupils perform at least as well as other pupils nationally and many do even better.
- The school prides itself on range and variety in its curriculum. Parents commented on the wide range of opportunities made available to their children. We were informed that 'the school has many opportunities for children in sports, arts, reading, drama, music and outdoor teaching, including gardening... and brings in very good visiting groups which the children enjoy and learn from.' I experienced this myself on my tour of the school when we visited a workshop on the Stone Age being delivered to Year 3 pupils. They were fully engaged with the rich use of artefacts, stories and acting in role.
- The teaching of art and design and science is a strength of the school. In art and design, pupils are able to refine and develop their skills, distinguish between the styles of different artists and respond creatively to challenges. For example, Year 6 pupils helped to design artwork for the entrance to a new footbridge across the M62, affectionately known locally as the 'sausage bridge'. In science, pupils enjoy frequent opportunities through the use of experiments to understand scientific concepts.
- Writing and numeracy are very well developed across the curriculum. This was clearly evident in the pupils' topic books where numerous opportunities were provided for pupils to write at length. Data linked to intensity of earthquakes or Olympic medal tables were also used for mathematical calculations and problem solving. Unfortunately, this is often at the expense of more in-depth learning in the topic itself, especially in the humanities.
- Pupils interviewed commented positively about the improved provision for sport in the school. The use of sport funding money has been spent wisely and the employment of a sports adviser has not only improved the quality of teaching but also other aspects of the curriculum. For example, I witnessed a small group of vulnerable and disadvantaged pupils being given first-aid training in how to resuscitate a person who has had a heart attack or has stopped breathing. Good questioning supported the learning. Mistakes in the technique of heart massage and mouth-to-mouth resuscitation were clearly

identified and corrected. There has also been an increase in the number of pupils participating in lunchtime and after-school activities as well as in inter-school competitions.

- Poor attendance has been an issue for the school for some time. A concerted effort has been made this academic year to improve attendance, especially of the disadvantaged pupils. A comprehensive plan is in place involving immediate home contact, rewards, fines and incentives as well as coordinated working with local authority officers. This is having an impact, although the school acknowledges the need to sustain the effort and make even further progress. Attendance in 2014/15 was not good enough at 94.4%. Current attendance now stands at 95.2% and is inching towards the national average. As one parent identified, 'Communication with the school is of a very high standard. Text messages regarding attendance rates and information are consistent. There is obviously a clear message given to pupils regarding consistent high standards of attendance. Our daughter is keen to achieve her attendance badge at the end of term and was loath to stay off for one day despite being sick.'

### **Next steps for the school**

Leaders and governors should ensure that:

- teachers provide greater challenge for the most able
- attendance rises further to be closer to or exceeding the national average
- the teaching of topic work not only provides a rich context for the application of literacy and mathematical skills, but also leads to real in-depth learning of other subjects, especially the humanities.

I am copying this letter to the Chair of the Governing Body, the Regional Schools Commissioner and the Director of Children's Services for Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Leszek Iwaskow

**Her Majesty's Inspector**

### **Information about the inspection**

During the inspection I held meetings with you, your deputy and phase leaders, including the leader with responsibility for mathematics. In addition, discussions were held with the newly appointed inclusion manager, the school business

manager, a representative from the local authority and four governors. I went on two tours of the school accompanied by yourself and your deputy, visiting classes across the school to see the learning that was taking place as well as the attitudes and behaviour of the pupils. I looked at examples of pupils' work and held informal conversations with pupils as I toured the school. I held longer discussions with pupils from Year 3 and Year 6 to determine what they thought about provision in the school. I also reviewed a range of documentation from the school website and some which you provided. Documentation scrutinised included the school's self-evaluation and its development plan. Additionally, I considered the school's record of checks made on adults who work at the school, and read about the curriculum being offered and the way in which sports funding and pupil premium funding was being used. I also looked at the responses to questionnaires completed for the inspection by pupils, staff and parents as well as the school's own survey of parents' views.